

Fall 2020

Full Issue

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EXPERIENTIAL **LEARNING** & **TEACHING** IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ELTHE Volume 3.1 - FALL 2020

Experiential Learning and Teaching During COVID-19

Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education

VOLUME 3.1 - Fall 2020

Experiential Learning and Teaching During COVID-19

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Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education

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COVER IMAGE: A worker sits behind a plexiglass divider as she talks with a parent about school registration in Des Moines, Iowa. Image adapted from the [original image](#) taken by [Phil Roeder](#) and made available under an [Attribution 2.0 Generic \(CC BY 2.0\)](#) license.

Editor's Note

MARIO D'AGOSTINO

Nova Southeastern University

The onset of March 2020 presented unique challenges to our profession that no instructor, administrator, or institution was exempt from. The presence of COVID-19 forced practitioners the world over to amend courses and programs on the fly, while maintaining a level-headedness to move forward in an uncharted academic landscape. My institution, like many others, suspended in-person classes in early March and recommended all instructors to make plans to fully transition their courses online.

Reflecting on this time now only augments how surreal of an experience it was. I had just arrived back into the United States after traveling to Europe with an undergraduate course. The course, "Genocide in the Twentieth Century," brought students to sites of genocide across Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and Bosnia); a dear colleague of mine who instructed the class asked me to join the class as a chaperone. Almost at the very moment we entered back into the United States, myself and two other colleagues on the trip were confronted with the mandate to begin moving our courses online. For me, this included trans-

itioning five writing courses, along with a film studies course that investigated depictions of science in American cinema.

These courses presented their own unique challenges in becoming online synchronous, while maintaining the fidelity of the courses. The film studies class demanded that I get especially creative. The class could no longer congregate in person for a watch and chat, as we did pre-COVID. Rather, Netflix Party and Discord became new modalities for pedagogical success. As I think back on this time now, my greatest challenge concerned humanistic issues. So many of my students were no longer

"As I think back on this time now, my greatest challenge concerned humanistic issues."

on campus; they now found themselves back at home where they were unequipped with proper technology or a stable internet connection. The transition did not simply present problems pertaining to course management or syllabi; rather, it galvanized our responsibility to ensure that all students were participating on a level playing field, and that they all had access to course materials.

While my perspective was certainly not unique, it was our shared chal-

lenges that led to the creation of this special issue's CFP. As *ELTHE*'s editor-in-chief, Kevin Dvorak, noted, we are all combing through an uncertain landscape. As such, it is important that we collect the testimonies of our peers, with hopes that their experiences will inform other experiential practitioners that find themselves in a similar position. The many voices and perspectives that you will find in this issue speak to the challenges of the last six months.

This first part of a two-part special issue includes five contributions from experiential educators across the disciplines. Joy Guarino shares her experience moving SUNY Buffalo State College's dance program fully online. R. Louis Hirsch and Aardra Kachroo describe transitioning an Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology (ABT) program online, providing important advice on how to salvage students' research experience despite lab closures. Kathy R. Doody, Pamela Schuetze, and Katrina Fulcher reflect on moving a collaborative and multidisciplinary service-learning project online, specifically changing assignments requiring in-person developmental screenings to online formats. Ryan Hargrove and Travis Klondike rethink face-to-face interactions in two institutional contexts, focusing on how instructors address a void in communal interaction and emotional connectedness. Finally, Elizabeth Lucas Combs and Aaron Kyle Schwartz discuss how they maintained innovative experiential learning for dietetic interns in Supervised Practice Programs (SPPs).

We are excited to share these articles with you and hope that they provide guidance and insight to

others as we collectively navigate the 2020-2021 academic year. ■

Bridging the Gap with Voice and Movement

JOY A. GUARINO

SUNY Buffalo State College

Introduction

Dance at SUNY Buffalo State College delivers a liberal arts education and embraces a civic and community engagement philosophy in all aspects of the program. In addition to rigorous studio training that enhances the physical experience of the art form, the diverse curriculum is designed to deepen students' understanding of the cultural, historical, and aesthetic value of dance, while addressing local and global societal needs through numerous service-learning, artistic, and outreach projects. The COVID-19 pandemic is tremendously affecting artists, yet it is the arts that brings joy to people's lives during unsettling times. Now more than ever we need to educate the broader public on the impact of dance on our lives.

Program Description Prior to COVID-19

The civic and community-engaged interdisciplinary dance program fulfills our dance students' distinct aspirations while enlightening the public on the important role of dance in our world. We continue to explore ways to incorporate high impact practices (HIPS) and applied learning pedagogy into course design and teaching practice to strengthen

student learning. Contingent on the course, typical assignments include practicals, research papers, oral presentations, choreography, and lesson plan development. We intentionally extend the coursework beyond the classroom. Infusing concepts such as inclusion, mastery, and generosity into the teaching and learning process inspires students to want to share their hard work not only with their classmates but also with off-campus groups through community-engagement and service-learning projects.

For the Arts and Letters/Dance Interdisciplinary major, the culmination of a student's learning and vision of future endeavors is reflected in the capstone project; each project is as individual as the student and many include a community-engagement component. Whether it is a research study, resource guidebook, choreography, or other applied project, students are guided to produce a high-quality thesis that is presented in an open forum. Through community-engaged experiences, students become active citizens who reflect on the connection of dance to activism, education, culture, and aspects of daily life. Through the advocacy lens, there is an opportuni-

ty to educate others on the multiple benefits of experiencing dance. By fall 2019, community-engaged practices were incorporated into all course offerings from lecture to studio classes, and from first-year initiatives to senior seminars.

Furthermore, dance performance also provides a unique opportunity for engaging an audience with meaningful social commentary. Choreography is a powerful civic tool when the dancers embody critical global issues and move to convey justice. Our annual spring dance concerts focus on themes that directly connect to the larger community by promoting multiple perspectives, social change, and active citizenship. In addition, students are involved as collaborators in the creative process, deepening their understanding of dance as civic engagement and community building. Faculty, students, alumni, and guest artists have presented a wide range of choreography, providing audiences with engaging and time relevant concepts that spark change.

Changes Made Due to COVID-19

In the middle of the spring 2020 semester, we were forced to quickly rethink the delivery of course content and assessments. Like most educators, we considered how to convert our current teaching methods to a virtual setting, engaging students remotely. To continue the personal interaction with dance students, we utilized discussion forums, video conferencing, and filmed or live-streamed dance technique classes for teaching. Recently, we have been de-

liberately connecting assignments and some assessments to dance advocacy by affording the opportunity for the students to do a public presentation of their work. When physical gatherings were no longer permitted, we needed to explore other avenues of outreach. Therefore, to reach the public, student research essays on the impact of dance on a variety of populations were converted to personal letters and sent to officials such as the NYS Education and/or Health Commissioners, K-12 Superintendents and/or School Boards, etc., for the purpose of influencing decision-making. Oral presentations were abridged to create social media campaigns, broadening the awareness of the impact of dance on humanity.

We needed to think even more creatively when converting two major community-engaged projects. Program-wide service-learning experiences required that students in six different dance courses continue collaborating through email and video conferencing to create dance activities that met the project requests of our six community partners. The design has always considered both the population being served, which ranges from refugee children to adults with special needs, and the content and concepts of each course. Traditionally, the activities are conducted onsite, bringing specialized dance education to these diverse populations. Given the current situation, it was impossible for the close to seventy students to present these activities in person. With guidance and support from the College's Civic and Community Engagement Office, the

**“Choreography is a powerful
civic tool when the dancers
embody critical global issues
and move to convey justice.”**

goal changed to assembling the students' lessons to create guidebooks that introduced some background information on the benefits of dance and offered a series of lessons/activities specific to each community partner's population. The guidebooks were distributed to community partners so they can implement them in the future. Our students were excited to share their creations and look forward to continuing with our community partners in the future.

This year's annual spring dance concert, "The World Grooves: Dance Traditions and Explorations" asked our alumni choreographers to embody traditions--their beliefs, ideals, and practices—and accordingly invite the audience to examine their values and standards and to explore new ways for engagement and exchange. For prior concerts, our student-run Dance Association offered public workshops that introduced participants to aspects of the choreography, which subsequently made for a richer audience experience. We were not able to present "The World Grooves"; however, students continued reviewing rehearsal videos and choreographers' notes to then reflect on performance skills and keep the works in our repertoire to perform at a later date. They also designed dance activities to prepare a future audience. COVID-19 may have changed the process but it didn't stop our students' passion for advancing dance education and engaging our community.

Challenges Faced or Problem-solving Techniques Employed

With a short transition period, dance faculty agreed that what was most important was delivering the Student

Learning Outcomes for each course while continuing to address our students' emotional well-being and inadequate equipment for proper remote learning. We felt we were constantly searching for ways to engage the students who reported lack of motivation and how to adjust the delivery for students who struggled with connecting remotely or were working as essential employees. Dance is a kinesthetic art form; the body is the instrument. Evaluation of physical skill development is the primary assessment in a studio course. We attempted to view and review the dancers performing their warm-up exercises and choreographed combinations to analyze and offer suggestions.

This was challenging for two reasons – the camera angle, focus, and/or distance prevented quality viewing and, in some cases, the students did not want the camera to open their homes to others. It became more important than ever to discover a way to inspire them and we decided that we needed their input to make that happen. With the students, we brainstormed ways to self-assess and concentrate on honing their craft and learning new skills. Remaining true to our engagement mission, we discussed ways to utilize the current situation and explored concepts like restrictive environments, solo work, and empathy for and appreciation of others' circumstances. Discussion forums provided opportunity for conversation on pertinent topics and directed reflection assignments inspired the students to dig deeper to understand the relevance of what they were learning to what they were subsequently producing. In a final reflection, one student commented, "[e]ven though this didn't go as planned, I

learned how to organize a team and how to collaborate with people as their leader and partner.” Students realized that this is what we do as artists: problem solve, collaborate, express, and transform. Our weekly synchronous sessions were recorded so that classmates who couldn’t join for any reason would still be able to review the material and see and hear their peers coming together to learn and laugh. It was something to look forward to each week. Class became a catharsis.

Looking Ahead

Student voice has always been an important driver of the direction of the dance program, and we were reminded that being face-to-face, hybrid, or remote does not change this commitment. In final reflections, two students shared, “[b]eing flexible and ready to alter plans is essential, essential, essential, especially when a pandemic hits,” and “I will never forget this experience, thank you for putting so much trust into my hands.” If remote learning is the directive, then in August we will be surveying our students to better understand technology and space equity, meeting to review and reimagine course content, and collaborating with our community partners to design indirect service-learning experiences. Should we still not be able to come together to perform, students in dance composition will be asked to select a civically engaged theme. Throughout the semester, they will document their research, creative process, and movement experiences to create a solo work. The dance composition students’ final presentation, *Solo Flights*, will be a film shown on December 10th, Human Rights Day.

Conclusion

Although both dance as a discipline and civic and community engagement as a pedagogy are expressed best and have the most impact in a face-to-face experience, there was much to be explored and learned through this time of isolation. As educators, we need to remain open and navigate the situations, take advantage of teachable moments, and model what we expect from our students. ■

What to Do When the Lab Closes? Managing an Interdisciplinary, Undergraduate Research Capstone Course During a Global Pandemic

R. LOUIS HIRSCH AND AARDRA KACHROO

*University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
Department of Plant Pathology*

Introduction

The Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology (ABT) program at the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is a genetics-based, research-intensive, interdisciplinary program that consistently produces undergraduate scholars prepared for careers in research, medicine, and other health-related industries. The program enrolls approximately 250 students and is administered around a liberal philosophy of interdisciplinarity, with undergraduates encouraged to build their own individualized curricula centered on foundational courses in biology, chemistry, and genetics. This student-centric approach, combined with an array of faculty research foci, results in a diverse student body engaging in scholarship that ranges from human neurobiology to plant rhizosphere metagenomics. A hallmark of the ABT program is a required capstone independent research experience, which is scaffolded after courses focused on identifying areas of research interests, formulating independent research projects, understanding

the scientific method in practice, and conducting hypothesis-driven research and presenting it in technical writing and oral formats. Since this independent research experience is predominantly laboratory-based, campus closures and social distancing requirements that occurred during the eighth week of the 16-week spring semester disrupted the pace of investigation and threatened the scholarship and, in some cases, graduation of many students. Despite interruptions to the research and academic enterprise, the faculty and students utilized several approaches to salvage their research experiences. These examples may offer strategies for similar programs to utilize as academia adapts to the institutional changes initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Program Description Prior to COVID-19

ABT 395/399: Independent Study in Biotechnology is the required capstone research experience course in the ABT program. Students enrolled in the

course have generally completed courses on how to write and present in the sciences, and they have identified a mentor for their independent research project. Often, students take this course after completing other research experiences through work-study programs, federal REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduate) programs, and volunteer internships. Because students undertake diverse projects from several different disciplines (e.g., medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and agriculture), the course is decentralized, with 50% of assessment weight dependent on mentor feedback of the student's research performance and adherence to course guidelines and submission timelines. The four essential requirements are: 1) Verification of an ABT program-approved research proposal or learning contract; 2) Completion of the approved research activities under the supervision of a faculty mentor; 3) Submission of a 12-page written report, which follows the format of a scientific manuscript (i.e., abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion) and contains revisions of content developed in previous scaffolded classes and; 4) Presentation of a 12-15 minute oral report. The oral presentation is the most important component of the course (other than conducting the research itself) and is presented during a 1-2 day public symposium comprised of student speakers. Community-wide participation by students, faculty, and laboratory members enables scientific discourse via robust discussions during the symposium. The faculty assess individual presentations based on a holistic rubric, which is used to inform course assessment scores and recognize the best overall presentation for a named award at the conclusion of the symposium.

Changes Made Due to COVID-19

The mid-semester timing of COVID-19 laboratory closures and other disruptions—including transitioning to online-only delivery of classes at the University of Kentucky—generated several unique challenges for students and their faculty mentors. The first (and simplest) change made was to move the oral presentation symposium online through Zoom (the preferred platform for the University of Kentucky), while retaining the original class schedule and assessment strategy. Several classwide and individual practice sessions were conducted to ensure student ease with use of technology and giving presentations remotely. The most important assessment faculty needed to make was whether students would be in a reasonable position to complete their written and oral presentation requirements by the semester's end. Because most student-led research effectively ended in the middle of the semester, students fell into four different groups based on the status of their planned research: 1) Completed research and data analysis; 2) Able to complete remaining research and/or data analysis remotely; 3) Almost complete research, but lacking final pieces of data; 4) Insufficient data to make a reasonable written/oral presentation.

Each group of students was advised differently in order to either complete their research remotely or finalize their incomplete projects for presentation in a scientifically sound manner. Students who were not in their last semester were given the option to defer presentations to subsequent semesters by receiving an incomplete grade. Twenty-eight percent of students chose this option.

Students who had completed their research or could finish remotely worked with their research mentors and course coordinator to prepare, review, and finalize reports remotely. In this regard, access to on-campus computational infrastructure and programs were critical for projects that involved bioinformatics or specialized data analyses. In one unique case, a student was able to continue and complete their wet-research project (behavioral analyses of a common insect utilizing straightforward techniques, inexpensive equipment, and biohazard-free materials) at home. Students who completed a majority of their research but lacked essential hypotheses-testing data were advised to present a theoretical discourse on what possible outcomes or types of data would have proven/disproven their initial hypotheses. Such reports started strong and were empirically grounded but concluded with what the data could have revealed if complete. Though unavoidably disappointing, one positive outcome of such cases is that several motivated students hope to complete their promising but unfinished research projects once laboratory access and research is restored.

“The biggest challenge was helping students that needed to complete the course in order to graduate but whose research projects could not be completed remotely.”

The biggest challenge was helping students that needed to complete the course in order to graduate but whose research projects could not be completed remotely. Such students fell in two categories. The first group consisted of students who had only conducted a small fraction of their projects and demonstrated an aptitude for their work by producing results but lacked the time

and practice to be truly familiar with the nuances of their research. Faculty mentors and course coordinators worked with such students to bring their preliminary data to a reasonable conclusion. These students were primarily assessed on the demonstrated understanding of their overall research, thoroughness of their discussion, and critical analyses of different anticipated outcomes.

Audience queries focused primarily on broader impacts of the research. The second group was students who had not meaningfully initiated their projects and lacked any data. Normally, these students would have received an “Incomplete” and would be required to complete course requirements in the summer session in order to graduate on time. Such students (a minor percentage of the class) were asked to develop and present a proposed project pertaining to their research mentor’s field of research. Presentations were assessed for depth of literature review, scientific merit of the hypothesis, and thoroughness of experimental design.

Challenges Faced or Problem-solving Techniques Employed

Based on official university policies, which mandated programs exhibit the utmost flexibility and creativity to help students finish the semester, the most important challenge became balancing course policy liberalizations with maintaining as much scientific and methodological rigor as possible, to ensure that all students received a consistent and valuable experience. To this end,

any questionable situation was assessed in the student's favor. Many students experienced connectivity issues or had difficulties consistently engaging with their course work due to their rural location and/or complex living conditions. While these cases were frequently challenging during the remainder of the semester, all of the students were able to prioritize and complete their course requirements adequately, though it should be noted that a small minority of the students stopped responding to faculty intervention after the transition to distance learning. These situations persisted despite significant contact efforts from the university, college, and course-associated faculty. In these cases, students were awarded an Incomplete while attempts to reach them continue.

COVID-19 disrupted the pace of research for the mentors, as well, despite exceptions granted for agricultural and medically relevant projects that were deemed essential. Some mentors experienced impactful changes to their programs and had to judiciously manage their time while trying to maintain the productivity of their labs. Some mentors were unable to devote sufficient attention to their undergraduate mentees during the final stages of presentation development due to adjustments to teaching/research/extension activities. For these students, program faculty interceded and assisted in the mentor's stead.

Looking Ahead

If undergraduate students are allowed to reengage with research during the fall semester (which current statements from university administration indicate), then the Independent Study in Biotechnology course will ensure all

participating students and their mentors have fallback plans based on the likely scenarios for a fall semester. Currently, the

University of Kentucky has publicized three different potential schedules: Normal, hybrid (some combination of online and in-person), and fully online. Since the impact of the hybrid and online-only approaches on laboratory and experiential education classes is still unclear, the course faculty are encouraging all prospective students and mentors to identify projects with obvious and attainable endpoints or research that can be conducted or analyzed remotely. Examples include: bioinformatic analyses, imaging scans, chromatography scans, existing datasets from previous projects, and virtual experiences in wet-lab research through various platforms such as JoVE (<https://www.jove.com/>). Furthermore, the course assessment strategy will change to include more digital interaction (i.e., checking in) between students and program faculty to ensure that the pace of research is satisfactory and that institutional policies (which may change week to week) are not unduly impacting the research experience.

Conclusion

The required Independent Study in Biotechnology course is an important discerning element of the Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology program at the University of Kentucky. Because this course is critical to ensuring students are ready to enter the workforce upon graduation, the program will continue to provide training in different aspects of the research enterprise. As faculty operate under the reasonable assumption of inevitable COVID-19-related disruptions in the future, program leadership will

continue to explore additional novel avenues of providing enriching undergraduate research experiences. It is important for academic programs and individual enrichment courses to develop reasonable adaptive strategies that best achieve student learning objectives while maintaining the rigor of their offerings. ■

Service Learning in the Time of COVID-19

KATHY R. DOODY, PAMELA SCHUETZE,

AND KATRINA FULCHER

SUNY Buffalo State College

Introduction

This essay describes a collaborative service-learning project in which psychology and speech-language pathology undergraduate students, along with special education graduate students, completed developmental screenings as part of their training in providing effective services to children. Universal developmental screening is an important tool in the early identification of developmental delays in young children and is increasingly incorporated into early childhood education. However, limited resources make it difficult for educators to routinely screen all young children in their care. Our students were able to meet this need for two local childcare centers by conducting developmental screenings in transdisciplinary groups.

Components of this project also included a focus on the development of professional dispositions and civic engagement. Students maintained reflective journals and responded to prompts that aligned with components of the project before, during, and after the screening transpired. Students also completed a final project that contained a written component and

oral presentation of a selected child in case study form. Although the final assignments varied between the three courses, the basic expectations of the written and oral assignments remained consistent from professor to professor.

Program Description Prior to COVID-19

This project was conceptualized in 2014 as a joint initiative between inter-related courses and disciplines to encourage transdisciplinary collaboration at the pre-service level. Each course included a service-learning assignment or designation, requiring students to complete a minimum of ten hours of service related to their discipline within the communities surrounding our urban-engaged campus. Prior to COVID-19, this project organically evolved and expanded each year in direct response to student and stakeholder feedback.

The project entailed forming trans-disciplinary groups, with a graduate special education student acting as a peer mentor to the psychology and speech-language pathology undergraduate students. Students were trained in

the implementation of a universal, early childhood developmental screening, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), and used this screening to assess young children who attended two different childcare centers. One childcare center was located on our campus, serving children of our student body, staff, and faculty. The second childcare center was subsidized by community corporations to meet the needs of children experiencing poverty, homelessness, and childhood trauma. The parents of these children experienced substance abuse issues, mental health disorders, or incarceration.

Although the essential nature of this project has remained constant, each year professors place additional focus on one element of the project that would be studied in greater detail based on student feedback. For example, in reviewing comments from

a post-survey conducted after the first cohort of students completed this project, students indicated that although the training provided was meaningful, it would be helpful to witness the administration of an actual screening. Taking that feedback to heart, we extensively searched for training videos and found none. Hence, we added a component to the project requiring each group of students to create a video of their ASQ administration to a child. Parental consents were obtained and confidentiality was maintained. Students created a script and voiceover narration, talking us through the screening implementation process. Over thirty training videos were created as a result of this assignment.

Changes Made Due to COVID-19

Originally, the project required students to engage in face-to-face interaction with peers and onsite personnel; in-person planning meetings with groupmates; and physical interactions with young children during the screening process. Transdisciplinary groups were scheduled to complete screenings from February through April. We were faced with the realities of COVID19 in mid-March. Our public institution is part of a state-run system. On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the Governor announced that our school's spring break would commence a week earlier than scheduled. Students were instructed to leave for break and not physically return, unless our dormitories were their only housing option. Post-break, classes traditionally held in-person were immediately

transitioned to a distance-learning format. The governor's announcement was made 72 hours before the break commenced.

At that time, depending upon the frequency of class meetings, some professors were able to see their students for one final class. Others not at all. The student break was also extended from one week to two to allow faculty an extra seven days to transition to remote instruction. For all intents and purposes, spring break was nonexistent for faculty as we scrambled to convert content to a distance learning format.

To accommodate our students who had not yet completed the screening projects, we designed a meaningful alternate for project for those remaining students.

We discussed various options, including asking students to screen a child within their family or circle of friends. However, as social distancing regulations became more stringent, this option did not prove prudent or practical. We were also sensitive to the trauma our students were likely experiencing and wanted to ensure that modifications to the assignment met our educational goals without providing unnecessary stress for our students. After much deliberation, we remembered the numerous videos we asked our students to create several years before. We determined that the assignment for our remaining students could be converted to utilize many of our unused training videos. Essentially, we would ask the current students to select one child ASQ screening and complete the scoring protocols during the viewing process. Although this modification meant that students were no longer meeting a community need, they still had the opportunity to learn critical developmental screening skills. We reviewed our original final assignment and realized that many questions posed were still relevant to all our students, whether they screened a child in-person or by video proxy.

We revisited each video in painstaking detail, selecting those that were clear and illustrative, but still required our current students to observe child behavior carefully to answer the ASQ. We also wanted to mirror the screening experience as closely as possible. Therefore, we intentionally selected videos that represented children from diverse backgrounds as well as a variety of ages.

Challenges Faced or Problem-solving Techniques Employed

We faced additional challenges resulting from our modified assignment. This assignment is complex and has multiple layers. We first needed to examine the four reflective journal entry questions originally asked. These prompts were to be answered at pre-determined points in time: pre-training, post-training, pre-screening, and post-screening. We easily ascertained that the first two entries could remain intact. We also determined that the questions we had posed prescreening could also be maintained. We did, however, have to create a new set of reflective journal entries for the students completing the modified assignment, which resulted in a modified version of our post-training questions. Our focus this year centered on professional conduct. For the students who completed the training in-person, we asked them to critique their own professional dispositions in a self-reflective exercise. For the students who completed the modified version of the post-screening questions, we asked them to critique the professional behaviors of the ASQ screeners observed in the training videos. Using those responses as a catalyst, we then asked them to reflect upon their own behaviors in similar professional situations. We encouraged them to consider how modification of their own behavior, as a result of what they learned from observing others, could result in personal growth or the attainment of career goals.

An additional challenge centered on the post-assignment survey queries. We reviewed the existing questions with care, realizing many of them were relevant to all students. However, there were several

questions not applicable to the students completing the modified assignment. We added a section of survey questions pertaining only to the modified assignment. The electronic survey tool utilized allowed us to disaggregate the responses from the two groups of students, providing a rich and comprehensive study in contrast of experiences and perspective.

Lastly, we each adjusted our verbal case study presentation accordingly to reflect the two types of assessment experienced by our students. These oral presentations were delivered remotely through video conferencing which afforded each of us the opportunity to debrief with our students in real time and respond to their individual reports.

Looking Ahead

As part of ongoing data collection, we examined items directly pertaining to the modified assignment. Quantitative analyses indicated that students believed they gained critical skills. Furthermore, those who completed the original assignment (n=35) did not significantly differ from students who completed the alternative assignment (n=20) on their perceptions of the importance of transdisciplinary practices and developmental screening, the development of professional dispositions, or their interest in working with young children and making a positive contribution to the community (all ps >.10).

Qualitative analyses identified three areas students missed by completing the modified assignment: flexibility, communication, and collaboration. These are representative comments for each three areas:

Flexibility

- *"If I had been able to complete the original service-learning project, I would have to had to rely on my true observations. Watching a video allows me to replay and also sit in the comfort of my own home. This was a disadvantage."*

- *"I just feel as if I missed the complete experience of having to be creative when coming up with ways for the child to execute the tasks. I do not think I missed out on any skills, I just missed out on experiencing it."*

Communication

- *"I think I would have gained more skill in areas like communication and teamwork in-person. I also would have been able to work with clients in the real world which would have been beneficial."*

Collaboration

- *"I think I would have gained more collaborative skills if I was able to complete the original project. Since I was unable to work with an individual with a different major, I was unable to share my knowledge and unable to hear a different perspective based off of their knowledge in a different area."*

However, overall, students in all disciplines indicated an understanding that, in these unprecedented times, faculty created an assignment that was valuable:

- *"I'm not quite sure [how this could have been improved]. It was probably difficult coming up with an alternative assignment!"*

- *"I think how the project was presented online worked out well. It was very straightforward and easy to complete and follow through."*

Conclusion

In retrospect, we were proud that we were able to salvage this assignment given the circumstances. Given the integral components of the assignment such as collaboration, child interaction, demonstration of appropriate behavior in a professional setting, and service provision to the community, this was an exceptionally challenging student experience to modify. However, we feel we were able to maintain the assignment's integrity while remaining sensitive to our students' additional commitments, academic or otherwise, and judiciously modify the assignment to fully consider their emotional well-being and anxiety levels.

Institution-wide, we routinely assess our students for their perspective of the semester upon completion. Due to COVID-19, we added questions to our survey inquiring if students felt their personal motivation or desire to complete their coursework was compromised in any way due to remote learning. We also asked them if they experienced feelings of stress or anxiety in relation to meeting course obligations or completing practicum or service-learning requirements. Although we do not have the results of these surveys at this moment, we are reassured that we are asking the right questions. Our mental health services on campus continue to provide teletherapy services to all students and our academic support services remained active, virtually, throughout the pandemic.

We share in the hope that, as a campus, state, or country, we will never experience another period like the spring semester of 2020. However, the silver lining of the COVID-19 experience is that faculty and students in our institution demonstrated resiliency, perseverance, and innovation. ■

In Search of Virtual Connectedness: A Comparative Essay in the Development of New Pedagogies for Remote Learning Environments

RYAN HARGROVE AND TRAVIS KLONDIKE

University of Kentucky

North Carolina State University

Introduction

The ongoing disruption caused by COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on how educators are shifting pedagogies, inventing approaches, and developing skills shifting, inventing, and developing various skills and approaches to foster an experiential learning curricula despite moving to physically-distanced forms of teaching. Design education, in particular, is faced with the challenge of rethinking a model that at its core is highly reliant on frequent face-to-face interactions. The studio classroom experience for centuries has utilized what are commonly referred to as “desk critiques.” These interactions are the central focus of most studio classes and serve as the primary pedagogical device for those who teach these courses. Instructors develop a strong rapport with students when they can meet two or three times a week in lecture. The abrupt transition to remote learning, as a result of COVID-19, challenged this model of engagement and, in turn, enabled the use of new approaches to support student learning.

This paper reflects on the shared experiences and documented outcomes of two design studio courses taught by instructors at different universities, who simultaneously deployed similar tools and techniques to conduct their classes in a virtual, online format. It is hoped that this articulation of challenges faced, lessons learned, and directions for the future will be useful to broader audiences of educators who typically rely on face-to-face interactions with students to successfully deliver their courses.

Program Description Prior to COVID-19

The two courses examined were both introductory design studios for landscape architecture students. The first was an undergraduate course at the University of Kentucky (UK), and the second a graduate course at North Carolina State University (NCSU). While meeting times and frequency were slightly different, the expectation at both institutions was for students to meet with instructors and/or peers multiple times per week to discuss their individually-led design pro-

posals and get feedback via in-person desk critiques. One important distinction between the two courses is that students in the undergraduate studio began the semester on a digital platform with every student using an Apple iPad and iPencil. Instructors and students began interacting and creating content digitally from the first day of the semester. The graduate students at NCSU did not use this Apple platform and, instead, created work using various computer-based programs. Instructors at NCSU adopted the Apple iPad and iPencil as a teaching aid during the transition to remote classes caused by COVID-19.

In both courses, the students were still very much discovering themselves as designers. Their interactions with instructors not only yielded critiques of their work but also began to mold and instill a way of seeing, thinking, and navigating complex problems. Both studios required that students balance the development of highly exploratory ways of thinking with evidence of technical competencies. Desk critiques and intermittent assignment reviews were collectively geared toward fostering each student's creative confidence and ability to work both autonomously and in group settings.

Changes Made Due to COVID-19

The sudden switch to remote delivery of courses, while requiring the rapid assimilation of various online mediums, also presented a tremendous opportunity to reconsider and adapt the traditional pedagogical underpinnings of design studios. Categorically,

the various methods deployed by the instructors can be synthesized to fit three distinct approaches: 1) modeling a sense of order; 2) tightening feedback loops; and 3) developing a digital footprint.

Modeling a Sense of Order

Once decisions were made to transition the remainder of the semester into an online format, continuity plans were developed by the instructors for each class. These plans described, in detail, how classes were to be conducted, how assignments were to be altered, and what online platforms were to be used. Despite all changes, however, the goal remained to model in-class behavior and expectations as much as possible. To achieve this, the professors: 1) modified lecture content to fit pre-recorded formats as demonstrations or step-by-step guides; and 2) created a repeatable process for conducting in-class meetings (e.g., "virtual desk critiques").

Sharing continuity plans, modifying the accessibility of lecture content, and operationalizing new methods for one-on-one meetings created a very structured environment that allowed for greater efficiencies during class hours. In the end-of-semester evaluations for both courses, 75% of all student respondents positively noted these added efficiencies as part of their answers to an open-ended question about strengths of the course (n=32). However, it was also noted that the spontaneity of peer-to-peer interactions within this highly structured format was greatly diminished. Personal connectedness and simulating a culture of togetherness amongst students was difficult to establish given the steriliz-

"In both courses, the students were still very much discovering themselves as designers."

ing effect of timed, remote interactions.

Tightening Feedback Loops

Despite the inherent rigidity in the new class structure, the line between in-class versus out-of-class hours was significantly blurred. Communicating with students in a wide variety of formats, the lack of readily available classmates with whom to ask questions, and the physical vagueness of what defines an office, likely reduced perceived barriers for student-to-teacher interactions. Though these circumstances added extra commitments of time from both instructors, the additional meetings and digital mark-ups in between classes placed a stronger impetus on students to more quickly iterate before the next in-class session—enhancing the overall quality of work produced from one session to the next.

Developing a Digital Footprint

Perhaps the most impactful learning tool generated was the co-development of a digital footprint between each student and instructor. There was an expectation that each student would digitally share their progress work prior to their scheduled virtual meeting. The instructors then utilized a combination of iPad Pros with iPencils and the Morpholio Trace app in order to “digitally draw” on each student’s work while simultaneously engaging in a live discussion via Zoom. Digital recordings of the audio and visual drawings from the conversation were then emailed to each student at the conclusion of their time slot to serve as a multisensory artifact of the meeting. These added layers of documentation created a library of references for each student and instructor to track progress and recall for future use.

Challenges Faced or Problem-solving Techniques Employed

The combination of tools used to conduct virtual desk critiques allowed for the rapid conveyance of meaningful feedback at a time when student-to-instructor communication could have become slow and cumbersome. In the end-of-semester student evaluations for both courses, 78% of respondents positively mentioned the use of the described “virtual desk critique” approach as part of their answers to an open-ended question about strengths of the courses (n=32). When combined with transparent lines of class-wide communication and an organized system for compiling each student’s “digital footprint” (i.e., Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive), the use of the described Apple products with the Morpholio Trace app and Zoom video conferencing platform proved to be effective for replacing, and even strengthening, many aspects of in-person meetings between students and instructors.

Student-to-student virtual communications, however, were not able to capture the same energy that is typically present in studio environments. Instructors attempted to recreate this type of interaction through small-group video conferences, peer-to-peer reviews of work, and by utilizing chat features during student presentations. While helpful, none of these were able to replicate the instantaneous ‘snow-balling’ of ideas that are present when groups of students are collectively working through a problem in a shared space.

Looking Ahead

Many of the methods described in this paper were positively received by students in both classes; however, feelings of isolation persisted as the most vexing challenge with the switch to physically-distanced learning. Studio classrooms are designed to be collaborative environments where students feed off their cohort's unique blend of competitiveness, admiration, and inspiration to support each other's learning. Operating from solitary workstations discouraged the communal development of peer-to-peer synergies that would have otherwise been present.

General dissatisfaction related to this circumstance was consistently articulated in the end-of-semester student evaluations for both courses. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents mentioned a desire for more class-wide or group interactions as part of their answers to an open-ended question about suggestions for course improvement ($n=32$). Further development of tools and techniques to address the insular nature of virtual classrooms represents the most critical next step for both instructors.

Looking ahead, the utilization of hybrid classrooms—with a mixture of safely assembled in-person class sessions, and remote virtual sessions—seems like a plausible solution. Even if physical distancing mandates are lifted, aspects of remote learning that were successfully implemented during this past semester could be blended with new, thoughtfully crafted approaches for in-person meetings in order to provide more flexible and emotionally connected modes of learning compared to the previously accepted norm.

Conclusion

The reliance on seemingly underutilized technologies during the COVID-19 period provided new and exciting pathways for teaching and learning. In particular, the adoption of digitally passing students' work back and forth was well received and may have even enhanced the depth of student-teacher interactions. These digital conversations broke the mold of strict classroom hours and offered a means of more continuous engagement with students. On the other hand, there was a marked and important difference in the perception of authority based on a student's access to certain tools and devices.

As previously mentioned, each student in the undergraduate cohort had access to an iPad and iPencil at the start of semester. When the switch to remote learning occurred, they each had the same ability to digitally draw with the instructor during virtual desk critiques. Whereas the students in the graduate-level cohort, not having the same access to technology as their instructors, were immediately subject to an inferior position of having instructors digitally draw for them during virtual desk critiques. While many students in the NCSU group eventually found alternative methods for more equitable ownership of each virtual desk critique, this inevitably took longer to develop and was not possible for everyone based on varying degrees of technological access.

Similarly, peer-to-peer interactions were noticeably diminished during this enforced period of remote learning. The significant time commitment during in-class hours devoted to one-on-one meetings via Zoom likely reinforced what had

already become an isolating socio-emotional experience for many. While certain pedagogical adjustments to combat these types of experiences may help in the future, it is difficult to imagine a circumstance that would adequately replace the foundational nature of communal empathy and drive that occurs in studio settings. This position highlights the importance of having started the courses in a face-to-face format, thus allowing for a level of emotional connection with instructors and peers to develop prior to the transition to physically-distanced classes. Had this not occurred, the rapid assimilation of virtual desk critiques would have been much more challenging.

Moving forward, how might educators think of new approaches for establishing student-to-teacher and student-to-student connectedness in a hybrid class setting? Could semesters, or even certain classes, be split into in-person and remote sessions? Ultimately, students need to perceive some sense of community in order to effectively develop a way of thinking that accounts for and relies upon collaboration, consensus and multiple perspectives.

If peer-to-peer togetherness can be accommodated, perhaps future courses could be framed as models of adaptation, not only relative to student learning outcomes but also in curriculum and instruction. Should educators build disruptions into courses for the very purpose of developing adaptable and flexible ways of thinking? As this recent experience revealed, these shifts can sharpen focus for both students and instructors to prompt important reflections relative to what, why and how learning is being supported. The challenge for students

this past semester became “can you adapt and do great work?” And, in fact, despite many unfavorable conditions, the work of most students during this COVID-19 disruption still progressed, and in some cases may have even been better. It is now the role of instructors to reflect on the positives learned from this experience, be critical of what needs to be improved, and adapt to what may become the new normal. ■

Creating Engaged Community Scholarship through Alternate Experiential Learning in Dietetics Education

ELIZABETH LUCAS COMBS AND AARON KYLE SCHWARTZ

University of Kentucky

University of Kentucky

Introduction

Supervised Practice Programs (SPPs) are designed to provide innovative experiential learning opportunities for dietetic interns. The University of Kentucky Dietetics and Human Nutrition (UK DHN) program promotes critical thinking and integrates the hard skills learned in the classroom with soft skills required in a professional setting. The experience provides an opportunity for hands-on learning and application, creativity, and reflection linking theory to practice. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the 2019 SPP, challenging the fundamental nature of experiential learning. Problem-solving and flexibility were required to develop innovative approaches to helping interns meet core competency expectations through alternative supervised learning experiences. The lessons learned will inform future program activities that benefit from offering remote internship experiences.

Program Description Prior to COVID-19

UK DHN SPP is an accredited program designed to advance educational development beyond the undergraduate level, preparing students for entry into the dietetics profession. Learning is enhanced by providing interns with structured opportunities to apply knowledge in a professional setting. UK DHN SPP prepares interns to become professionally competent in food and nutrition systems and learn how these systems interact to support communities' and individuals' well-being. Core competencies necessary to practice as entry-level dietitians are met during this program. These competencies are set forth by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). Upon completion of the program, interns are eligible to sit for the Commission of Dietetics Registration (CDR) Exam to become credentialed Registered Dietitians.

“The lessons learned will inform future program activities that benefit from offering remote internship experiences.”

The UK DHN SPP annual cycle begins in January and concludes in August, providing twenty interns with a minimum of 1,200 supervised practice hours. Within this timeframe, facilities across the state of Kentucky provide interns with hands-on experiences in Food Service Systems Management, Community Nutrition, and Medical Nutrition Therapy. Interns complete assignments designed to supplement the practical experiences that occur on-site. Some examples include assessing an advanced clinical case study, conducting a plate waste study, creating a research project, planning and implementing a theme meal, and creating and distributing nutrition education in a community.

The program provides a learning environment that encourages students to use problem-solving skills, build self-confidence and seek new learning opportunities. The experiences foster individual independence, critical thinking, initiative, creativity, maturity, and self-reliance for successful entry into the profession.

Changes Made Due to COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, ACEND reduced the total number of experiential hours from 1,200 to 1,000 of which 400 hours could be completed through alternate, remote learning experiences. UK DHN SPP transitioned to remote learning in March 2020 with all interns departing their sites. To maintain the timeline to graduation, UK DHN SPP was able to quickly expand the breadth of its online experiences by leveraging both internal and external collaborators. Each original assignment intended to be completed on-site was quickly altered to allow for remote completion. For exam-

ple, a plate waste study to be completed on site was adapted to a self-assessment of food waste during the stay-at-home order along with a literature review on plate waste research and sustainability. The Nutrition Care Professionals¹ waived fees for a series of complex, interactive clinical case studies for internship programs to use during the pandemic and these activities were assigned on a weekly basis. Additionally, a broad scope of professional speakers were invited to present nutrition-related topics to interns remotely on a weekly basis.

A series of additional opportunities were created through collaboration to create impactful experiences both for the interns as well as the community. A DHN Assistant Professor, connected UK DHN SPP with Community Agricultural Nutrition Enterprises (CANE) in Whitesburg, KY, for a unique remote experience. CANE worked with interns to develop budgeted weekly meal plans and educational resources on food preparation. These resources were then included in meal kits distributed to families with school-aged children who lost two meals each day as a result of COVID-19. This project allowed students to strategically apply principles of management in a service-learning framework. UK DHN SPP collaborated with two UK DHN extension faculty for interns to create virtual extension program packages to educate and motivate Kentuckians to mindfully choose health promoting behaviors to prevent or manage chronic diseases. Interns created an information release, recorded a podcast, and created a virtual online program including a facilitator's guide. Using popular virtual platforms, students were able to design, implement, and evaluate presentations

to a target audience. Additionally, the DHN department chair spearheaded a collaboration for interns to learn about a social marketing project, Cook Together, Eat Together (CTET) and to apply that knowledge to create resources for Family & Consumer Science (FCS) Extension Agents. This engaged scholarship opportunity allowed interns to support FCS Agents with the creation of virtual nutrition education resources including podcasts, Facebook Live Events, and other platforms. The capstone project for this collaboration was to create and produce a high-quality recipe demonstration video and other resources to be presented through social media.

Challenges Faced or Problem-solving Techniques Employed

While the UK DHN SPP students have been moving forward with their goal of graduating on time by diligently completing remote work, there have been several challenges identified. Perhaps the most significant barrier was the interns' desire to participate and contribute to community organizations. When the transition to remote learning initially occurred, interns were completing assignments with simulated experiences. While these mock activities were helping them meet required competencies, they lacked the personal connection to meaningful work. Dietetics students have chosen a career path toward a helping profession and have a strong desire to produce work that directly impacts others. As students' motivation to complete the mock assignments waned, the

program promptly began developing collaborative projects to provide interns with opportunities that connected them with community organizations. The three projects described above, CANE Kitchen, extension program packages, and Cook Together, Eat Together, provided the interns with the opportunity to not only meet competencies, but to also produce meaningful work that had a direct impact on community members.

The second main challenge encountered was the amount of work completed in isolation on a computer. Interns struggled to manage the workload of virtual assignments given the monotonous nature of long hours of sedentary work. To reduce the burden of isolation, course instructors planned regular interactive meetings to maintain connections to the outside world. During these meetings, the interns were able to brainstorm, share thoughts, and hear from others. They were also able to hear from professional guests at each meeting. This helped strengthen the connection

“While these mock activities were helping them meet required competencies, they lacked the personal connection to meaningful work.”

of what they were doing virtually with the working world. Interns were able to gain an appreciation for the skillsets they were developing during this unique experiential learning situation. Additionally, several assignments included group work where students contributed individually and collaborated with small groups of three or four. These groups changed weekly to ensure that students were engaging with the maximum number of classmates possible. The necessity for social interaction was critical in maintaining intern morale, productivity, and

accountability. Finally, professional specialists were brought in to facilitate several of the projects for the interns. This allowed the interns to receive real-time feedback from professionals in the field, which provided some sense of normalcy to the interns and provided additional motivation to create the best work possible. These small changes provided the interns with the chance to demonstrate active participation, teamwork, and contributions in group settings.

Looking Ahead

Many campuses are reviewing their re-start efforts for the fall and the University of Kentucky is carefully examining different scenarios for the upcoming semester. While a final plan is not currently in place, it is important to plan for the possibility that some or all experiences will need to be delivered remotely. Lessons learned from this past year's rapid transition to remote experiential learning will be applied in the future if students need to gain alternate practice again.

The first lesson learned includes partnering with outside organizations to create experiential work that will be shared with external stakeholders. This not only provides interns with the motivation to create professional products since their work will have a direct impact on others, but also applies their knowledge in a professional setting. The second lesson learned was the value of inviting resident specialists to collaborate and engage with the interns on a regular basis. Interns appreciated hearing from professionals in the field and these interactions kept students accountable to maintain professionalism and produce high quality work. It also provided students with the profession-

al exchanges they were missing from their traditional internship experiences.

Conclusion

Transitioning an experiential learning program to remote delivery introduced challenges, but it also provided a chance to employ critical thinking skills and demonstrate innovative approaches. Moreover, it was a chance to model these professional characteristics that the supervised practice strives to cultivate in its dietetic interns. The supervised practice program is a critical piece of dietetics education in order to develop ability, confidence, knowledge, skills, and competence to practice as a registered dietitian. The current class of interns that has endured the unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had the chance to develop these traits through novel approaches employed to ensure their successful graduation and subsequent transition to the working world. ■

Notes

¹ <https://www.nutritioncarepro.com/>

References

Nutrition Care Professionals. (n.d.). Welcome to NCPRO. <https://www.nutritioncarepro.com/>.



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